

HOUSE BILL 596

By Jernigan

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 15,
relative to the observance of Tennessee Missing
Children's Day.

WHEREAS, between 1979 and 1981, a series of high-profile missing children cases and murders of children and young adults brought attention to the lack of coordinated efforts among federal, state, and local law enforcement to search for missing children; and

WHEREAS, in 1982, the Missing Children Act (Public Law 97-292, 96 Stat. 1259) was enacted, allowing information on missing children to be entered into the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Crime Information Center; and

WHEREAS, in 1984, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children was created to partner with the Department of Justice and help law enforcement find missing children, eliminate child sexual exploitation, and prevent child victimization; and

WHEREAS, according to the National Center, approximately 800,000 children are reported missing each year; and

WHEREAS, of these cases, more than 200,000 are victims of family abductions, and an estimated 58,000 are victims of nonfamily abductions; and

WHEREAS, annually, an estimated 115 children are victims of kidnappings in which the perpetrator is a stranger or slight acquaintance and involves a child being placed in grave danger; and

WHEREAS, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children has assisted law enforcement in the recovery of more than 193,000 missing children since being founded in 1984. The agency's recovery rate has grown from 62 percent in 1990 to more than 96 percent

of domestically missing children as of 2015, but too many children still remain among the missing; and

WHEREAS, it is highly appropriate that this body establish a special day to remember those children who are missing and give hope to their families; now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 15, Chapter 2, is amended by adding the following language as a new section:

March 4 of each year shall be observed as "Tennessee Missing Children's Day," to be proclaimed by the governor, to raise public awareness about child abduction and sexual exploitation and to promote public education efforts as to appropriate protective measures, and ways to respond and seek help from law enforcement, social services, and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. This day shall not be a legal holiday, as defined in § 15-1-101.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.